

THE  
PENITENT FEMALE.

Wherefore I say unto thee, her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much; but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little. And he said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven. And they that sat at meat with him began to say within themselves, Who is this that forgiveth sins also? (Luke vii. 47, 48, 49.)

THE following pages are put into the hands of young women who have been seduced from the paths of religion and virtue; not with a view to reproach them, but rather with the friendly intention of awakening in their minds (which, it is hoped, are not yet steeled against all reflection and remorse) some sense of the nature, tendency, and probable issue of their present degraded and wretched course of life, a course which threatens inevitable disgrace and ruin to both body and soul.

*Divine Mercy displayed in the Conversion and happy Death of a noted Harlot.*

MARY ——— was the daughter of David ———, who died at the age of 36, leaving four children and a wife near lying-in. Mary was then about seven years of age, and from that time her mother, with some assistance from the parish, provided for herself and children, by nursing and washing, till Mary was 15. At that early age she was seduced, and from that time to the age of 24, her mother, as well as herself, lived upon the wages of her iniquity. She was, however, not like harlots in common, for she avoided drinking, swearing, and lewd discourse. Her form was genteel, and her address engaging, so that her visitors

were mostly such as could pay high for admittance into her company ; but two years' affliction reduced both herself and her mother to great straits. After selling her clothes, and some other things, they sunk very low. At the beginning of her illness, some like herself used to call and look at her ; but they soon became tired of beholding such a spectacle as she then was, and it may justly be said, that she was shut out from society, till within about a month of her decease. Mrs.——, then hearing of her case, felt an earnest desire to make her a visit, and not liking to go alone, requested Mrs.—— to go with her. They went on Friday, 21st June, 1799, and were agreeably surprised to find that the chamber was neat and decent, and still more surprised, that a person of her late habits should appear so meek, modest, intelligent, and free from the looks of a prostitute. She did not, however, attempt to hide from them what she had been, but frankly acknowledged that she had gone as far in her wicked course as her constitution would admit ; and said, she supposed she should not have altered her mode of living had she not been afflicted, although her bodily complaints were the consequences of her sin, and she was certain she had brought upon herself the affliction she was suffering.

The following conversation then took place. "How long have you been confined ?" "Two years." "What have been your thoughts under your confinement ?" "I often think my sufferings are sent as a punishment for my past wicked life ; but I hope I have repented of it, and am now a penitent." "Why do you think so ?" "I am a poor ignorant creature, cannot read, never had any one to instruct me, nor have I ever been at church, or at any place of public worship, since I was fifteen." "Have you ever prayed during your illness ?" "As well as I could." "What have you prayed for ?" "That God would forgive my sins, and relieve me from my troubles which are very great, but not greater than I deserve." "Has no one ever read the scriptures to you ?" "We have no

Bible." "But you could have borrowed one." "I did once send to a neighbour's for one, but she sent word she was too busy to look for it." "Would you like to have the Bible read to you, and be instructed from it?" "Yes, that is what I have wished for a long time, and frequently have prayed during the last year, that God would send somebody to teach me; but my character has been so vile, that I have had but little hope that I should be so favoured." "Can you think we come to see you with any other motive?" "No; and I am overcome, that you should visit such a one as I." "Would you like to be dealt plainly with?" "Yes." "Then we fear, from what you have said, you have not yet had true repentance; and we think it was in mercy to you that God did not answer your prayers, to be taken from your troubles." "I have thought sometimes I was not right, the terrors of my mind have been so great."

A brief statement of true repentance, and of God's way of saving sinners, was then set before her, to which she listened with great attention; and when prayer was offered in her behalf, she appeared to join therein with great devotion.

The next day a pious woman was sent with some necessaries which she was destitute of; to whom she said, "It must be God that put it into the minds of — to visit me in my extremity. Their regard to my bodily wants is a great kindness which I could never have expected; but the prospect of farther instruction from them is a greater." She hoped they would soon come again for that purpose; for what they had said greatly affected her mind, as she had never heard of such things before.

Monday, 24th. The above two persons made her a second visit; and her answers to their inquiries, as well as her looks, proved that she attended to their former discourse; and before they left her, she requested their prayers, that she might not be deceived, but be made to know the worst of herself.

On Wednesday, 26th, Mrs.——, one of the persons

who first visited her, requesting the writer of this to accompany her, they went together ; and it appearing to them that God had prepared her heart to receive instruction, and that she was really in an awakened state, the nature of conversion was the subject of discourse, and we had reason to hope that it was not a lost visit. Asking what we should pray for, she replied, "That I may be more affected with my sins, and have them pardoned by the death of Christ; also, that my life might be spared, if it be the Lord's will." It was said, "But you have been wishing for death two years." She answered, "Yes, so I have; and had God taken me away according to my wish, I believe I should have been in a woful state; but I desire to live now, to evince that I am not what I once was: and that I may have an opportunity of warning some I know of, who continue as I was."

Tuesday, July 2d. The effects of converting grace were now the subjects of discourse; to which she was all attention, and said, "I do feel myself greatly different since *that first* visit, which I hope never to forget. Indeed, I have at times since, especially in the night-season, had great distress of mind, and horrors of conscience; but I feel a loathing of what I once loved and delighted in; and I admire the goodness of God, that I was not taken away in my sins." On Saturday, 6th, on being asked the state of her mind, she replied, "This has been race-week, and the races have brought to my recollection many of my sins which I had forgot. I never went but once to a race; but the season used to be a market to me in my trade of sin; and had I not been afflicted, I dare say I should have spent this week in the same manner, as formerly I did. I never thought of spending a race-week in such a way as this has been spent; but I never knew wherein happiness consisted before." She said also, she hoped she valued the Bible that had been sent her as the best present that was ever made her; though since, from what her nephew (a boy of about 11 years of age) had already read to her she found herself to

be a condemned miserable sinner ; yet she was kept from despair by such words as these, " Christ came into the world not to condemn but to save ;" and " when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both."

Monday, 8th. She now appeared to be growing fast in the knowledge of herself and Jesus Christ.

Saturday, 13th, she discoursed about sin, its deserts, and how it may be pardoned, as one that had indeed found mercy.

Thursday, 18th, her body was evidently worse ; but her mind appeared serene and spiritual. She seemed overwhelmed with a sense of pardoning mercy, exercised on such a wretch as she had been, and said, her meditations the past night had been such as she could not relate ; but they were followed with the calmness she now enjoyed. Guilt on her conscience, which before was like a heavy burden, appeared to her to be removed, and the fear of death seemed to be taken away. " O what a mercy !" said she ; " how greatly indebted must I be to that free grace, which you and my other new friends have spoken to me of, if I should be saved at last !"

Friday, 19th, Mrs.—— was with her from 10 to 12 in the forenoon : at her entering the chamber, she put forth her hand, and said, " Oh ! how glad I am to see you again ! I am certainly near my end ; but I see more into the things you spoke of at your first visit. *That visit* I shall never forget, and I want words to express my gratitude to you, and the love I feel to that Jesus who died for sinners. I now trust that he died for me, one of the vilest ; and I hope soon to see him." She then went on in a sweet strain for a considerable time. Her mother coming to the bedside, she said to her, " I entreated you last night to promise me, and I do entreat you to promise again, that, after my decease, you will go where you may hear those things taught, that now so unspeakably support me. I would not have you despair ; but pray that you may obtain mercy, as I have done, though such

a wretch as deserved no mercy.' After this, Mrs.—— asked if she could bear her to read a few lines : she replied, "I can, and I should be glad if you would." No. 66, of Songs in the Night, was then read, every line of which she seemed greatly to relish : she desired it might be read again, and said, "Blessed be God ! these now are exactly my views, though so lately quite unacquainted with the glorious method of salvation." She then paused, and after a short space, said, "But, oh ! my sins ! O that I had known the things I now know, before ! O that I had known them before I entered upon my wicked course ! But surely I am renewed, for I think I now know what communion with God is."

\* Saturday evening, 20th. Having been exercised with extreme pains the last night and this day, she appeared like a corpse, could but just be heard when she spoke, and it was with difficulty she uttered that she felt more of the evil of sin, and the preciousness of Christ. It was said to her, after one of her violent pains was abated, "The pains are very trying," She answered as well as she could, "Yes ; but I have not one too many." This was evidently the language of her heart, as under all her extremity of pain she was never heard to utter a repining word, neither was there discovered in her the least impatience. "And what are my pains, when compared with what my Bible says Christ endured for sinners ! What did he suffer, when he sweat as it were great drops of blood falling to the ground !" At leaving her this evening, her looks bespoke unfeigned gratitude.

Sunday, 21st. Her great pains continued, but her mind seemed all composure ; and though she was able to speak but little throughout the day, her gestures discovered that she was in a praying frame.

Monday, 22d. She was visibly dying all day, but appeared quite calm and very devout—pressing the hand of Mrs. ——, at parting, she said, in broken words, "I love you, I love all of you ;" but speech failing, she could get no farther : she then lifted up

ner eyes and one hand, upon which Mrs.— said, “You love Jesus better.” This, her countenance bespoke, was what she would have said, and she at length stammered in reply, “Yes.”—Afterwards she was understood to say, “Oh! how I wish that as this house has been the scene of wickedness, it may, after my decease, be a house of prayer.” In the evening, being past speaking, she beckoned her nephew to come near. She took hold of his hand, and with uplifted eyes, it is supposed, committed him to God. About five the next morning her pains ceased, and within twenty minutes after, her spirit took its flight into the eternal world, being quite sensible and devout to the last.—May not this relation be an encouragement to those Benevolent Societies lately established, for visiting, relieving and instructing the afflicted, who are poor and irreligious?

*Newport Pagnel.*

A. Z.

THE paper you have just read, you will observe, records the sorrows, confessions, and dissolution of one who once walked in the same evil course which you are now pursuing. You will see in what disease and wretchedness her course of sin ended; and, although we sincerely hope she found mercy, yet you will see what strong pangs of guilt imbittered her hours of affliction, and what strong expressions of remorse fell from her dying lips. Every expression of hers should be a warning to you. She spoke them on the verge of eternity; they were uttered by her dying lips; oh! listen to them, be admonished by them, and when you have read them, put them into the hands of such of your companions as can read, or read them yourself to such as are not able to do it for themselves. Who can tell but a good and gracious God may bless them, both to your own soul and to theirs also? If so, this Tract will be the instrument of saving the body from an untimely grave, and the soul from eternal misery. You may have sinned long, your sin may have had more aggravating circum-



stances than that of most of your companions in wickedness ; but God is gracious, Christ came into the world to save the chief of sinners, the grace of the Holy Spirit can change a heart as hard and as defiled as yours. Yes, Mary ———, whose wicked life, unfeigned repentance, and happy death, you have now read, was as vile a sinner as you, and she obtained mercy ; and now hear what one passage of holy Scripture says to you : “ As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way, and live : turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways, for why will ye die ? ” (Ezek. xxxiii. 11.) Are you ready to cry out, “ What ! may such a guilty miserable sinner as I am, hope to find mercy and salvation if I turn to the Lord ? May I, who have been as an outcast in society, be again restored to the company of the wise and good ? May I still hope to have days of joy and peace upon earth ; comfort and support in death ; and an interest and inheritance among the saints in heaven ? ” Yes, these and a thousand other blessings are given to those who repent of sin, and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ with the heart unto righteousness. Look to Jesus, trust in him, and he will pardon and save you.



*London : Printed by WILLIAM CLOWES and SONS, Duke-street, Lambeth, or THE RELIGIOUS TRACT SOCIETY ; and sold at the Depository, 56, Paternoster-row ; by J. NISBET and Co. 21, Berners-street Oxford-street ; and by other Booksellers.*

[Price 2s. 4d. per 100.]